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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 000993

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [AG](#) [UK](#) [IR](#)  
SUBJECT: UK DEFENSE SECRETARY AINSWORTH VISIT TO ALGERIA,  
BOOSTS BILATERAL SECURITY TIES

REF: (A) ALGIERS 959 (B) STATE 101027

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Classified By: William Jordan, Deputy Chief of Mission. Reasons: 1.4  
(b), (d)

Summary

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[¶1.](#) (C) The UK Ambassador in Algiers told us that the UK Secretary of State for Defense, during his October 26-27 visit to Algiers, signed a bilateral defense cooperation agreement that establishes a framework for UK training of Algerian military, information exchanges and joint exercises.

A helicopter sales agreement involving British/Italian-manufactured aircraft underscores Algerian interest in diversifying their sources for arms purchases after being burned by the Russians. End summary.

Bilateral Agreement

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[¶2.](#) (C) UK Secretary of State for Defense Robert Ainsworth visited Algiers October 26-27. UK Ambassador Henderson told us November 2 that Algeria and the UK during the visit signed a defense cooperation agreement that sets the framework for UK training of Algerian military here and in the UK and also covers information exchanges and joint exercises. He noted that the agreement had been under discussion for four years. The UK hoped the agreement would lead to annual defense staff talks.

Security in the Region

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[¶3.](#) (C) Ainsworth met with Algerian Minister of State for Defense Guenaizia and President Bouteflika. The latter said that Algeria had good CT information exchanges with Mauritania and Niger but that Mali was problematic. The UK Ambassador recalled that at a meeting with a visiting delegation of the Royal College of Defense Studies a few weeks earlier, Minister Delegate for Maghreb and Arab Affairs Abdelkader Messahel had been especially hard on Mali, saying its leaders could not be trusted and did not live up to agreements. Ainsworth told the Algerian president that Algeria was the only country in the region capable of bringing the countries of the Sahel together. Bouteflika also asked Ainsworth for more help with English language instruction. Henderson commented that the UK hopes to conduct more naval exercises with Algeria, largely because the UK has found these much easier to arrange than anything involving Algerian territory or airspace.

## Defense Sales

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¶4. (C) Henderson confirmed that Algeria has concluded a deal for 30 Augusta-Westland helicopters (to be built in Italy) and is looking for a larger contract for A-101 helicopters (that would be built in the UK) as well as a possible order for four frigates (which Henderson said the Algerians really do not need). The latter faces stiff competition from the Germans, Italians, and French, although Henderson doubted the Algerians would buy French due to political sensitivities. The Algerians are looking at buying second-hand, British-made patrol boats from Brunei but are running into end-use monitoring restrictions over equipment the Algerians want to mount on these boats. The Algerians are heavily focused on counter-IED technology and occasionally asking for unrealistic weapons systems, partly to test what suppliers might offer (in this context, Henderson noted they would not get the Sea Wolf missiles that normally go with the Bruneian patrol boats).

¶5. (C) In the UK view, the Russian sale of defective Russian aircraft earlier this decade had soured the Algerians on Russian equipment and was motivating them to look anew at Western weapons systems. Upcoming UK security visits include General Searby, the PM's special CT adviser for the Maghreb, scheduled to arrive later in November and Lord West, Under Secretary for Counterterrorism in the Home Office, for whom the UK embassy has requested meetings December 7-9.

### UK-Algeria "Contact Group"

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¶6. (C) We asked about the status of the UK-Algerian "contact  
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group" to which Algerian Presidential CT Adviser Rezag Bara referred in his meeting with DASD Huddleston. (Comment: Rezag Bara claimed that Algeria has such security discussion groups with the UK, Russia, and the Netherlands and suggested setting one up with the U.S., per ref a) Henderson answered that it is still under discussion and has not been stood up. He described considerable internal discussion over whether the UK lead should come from the military (his DATT's preference), Lord West (his CT officer's preference), or FCO Director of the Office of Defense and Strategic Threats Simon Manley (Henderson's choice). In Henderson's view, the group's structure should be flexible enough to permit interagency participation by a variety of UK entities based on the topics to be discussed at any given time.

### Iran and the Middle East

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¶7. (C) President Bouteflika argued to Ainsworth that the U.S. must engage Iran seriously. The Iranian leadership considered the UK and France compromised, since it believed they were behind the post-election protest in Iran. This left the U.S. as the only country that could lead the effort for a deal with Iran. Bouteflika also expressed to Ainsworth his continued support for a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East. Ainsworth had countered that the discovery of the Qom nuclear facility had undermined the climate of confidence that a nuclear agreement needed.  
Comment  
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¶8. (C) UK/Algerian ties are developing well, and Henderson seemed pleased overall with the increased engagement in the security area. Indeed, local newspapers made much recently of the decision to establish a permanent position at the UK embassy here to deal with illegal immigration. A sub-text in Henderson's presentation was that he was rather pleased to be able to relate to the Algerians as a major non-French EU player (something that was helping in terms of the tough

competition over frigate sales, since the difficult state of French-Algerian ties largely took the French out of contention) and as an alternative to the USG. The only significant irritant in the bilateral relationship is the lengthy wrangle to extradite fugitive Algerian financier Rafik Khalifa, who fled to the UK in 2003 after the collapse of his financial empire. HMG has sought to send him to Algeria to face trial, but successive moves by his lawyers to block or delay such action have caused much frustration in Whitehall as well as Algiers. Although Bouteflika did not raise the case when he met with Ainsworth, FM Medelci sidled up to Henderson afterward to complain about the most recent delay, which has pushed a court decision back to at least December 7, i.e., when Lord West is due in Algiers. End comment  
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